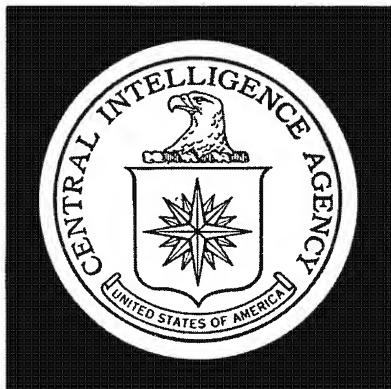


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C O N T E N T S

(Information as of 1200 EST)

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Vietnam
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Situation Report.

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GENERAL

Vietnam

The Viet Cong's release of three US prisoners in Cambodia was apparently designed for maximum propaganda impact.

The prisoners were "turned over" to a US "peace committee representative" at a ceremony in Phnom Penh on 11 November, then held incommunicado until the following day, when they were put on a Czechoslovakian Airlines plane bound for Prague. The prisoners and the "peace committee representative" left the plane at Beirut, however, and will return to the US on an American commercial airliner departing Beirut this morning.

The Viet Cong's interest in getting as much propaganda mileage as possible from the release is underlined in an official Cambodian document describing a late August meeting between the Viet Cong representative in Phnom Penh and the Cambodian foreign minister. The representative explicitly stated that the prisoners would be released for "humanitarian reasons," but with the real aim of encouraging US antiwar groups and demonstrating that the Viet Cong had always treated prisoners well. He claimed that US officials in the past had kept freed prisoners out of reach of the public and prevented them from freely expressing their ideas.

Ho Chi Minh played no role in the elaborate ceremonies in

Hanoi marking the 50th anniversary of the Soviet Revolution.

The 77-year-old President's only contribution to the occasion was a bland article written for the Soviet party paper. Given the importance the Communists attach to this anniversary, Ho's absence from the festivities is unusual. Illness may have prevented him from attending.

Ho has, in fact, made only three public appearances in recent months. The last was for North Vietnam's national day celebrations held in late August. Despite his inactivity and apparent aloofness from the political scene, there has been no indication during the past year that his subordinates have had difficulty in running the country without his immediate leadership and direction. The evidence suggests that the regime's major policies--particularly on strategy for the war and on possible peace negotiations--have been the result of collective decision making. 3.3(h)(2)

Vice President Ky is not entirely pleased with the composition of the new cabinet.

Reportedly, there are only five members of the cabinet or the directorates who can be called Ky supporters. These are Linh

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Quang Vien, minister of interior; Nguyen Bao Tri, minister of revolutionary development; Nguyen Xuan Phong, minister of information; Truong Thai Ton, minister of economy; and Nguyen Ngoc Linh, of the directorate of information.

Sharp engagements continue to be reported in the Dak To area of the central highlands

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between US forces participating in Operation MACARTHUR and elements of the North Vietnamese B-3 Front. Cumulative casualties for the heavy fighting in the first 12 days of November are: US--96 killed, 487 wounded, and two missing; enemy--619 killed, seven detained, and 101 individual and 25 crew-served weapons captured.

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